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ABSTRACT

Since the establishment of the pioneer USIS library in Mexico City in 1942, the nature of The United States Information Service (USIS) libraries has been subject to political disputes. The question of whether or not they should function as propaganda arms or information centers still remains a polemical issue. The USIA became an independent agency of the executive branch of government in 1953. Since then, the number of U.S. Information centers has grown to its present level of 133. Each Center tailors its programs to meet the special needs of its own community. Generally, the Information Center Service maintains four types of programs: 1) libraries or cultural centers for the study of the U.S.; 2) a commercial book program to place more American-written books in bookstores and classrooms; 3) teaching English; and 4) exhibits of American achievement. Moreover, the Centers assist the Informational Media Guaranty Program and Binational Centers around the world. Since 1961, a policy has been made to withdraw funds from Western Europe and to use them in the developing nations. Funds are appropriated each year by Congress. The future of USIS libraries is as uncertain as ever-changing world politics, the availability of funds, and the predispositions of the current administration. (CH)

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OCCASIONAL PAPERS

UNITED STATES INFORMATION SERVICE LIBRARIES

by
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INTRODUCTION

This is a comprehensive study of the United States Information Service (USIS) libraries--a cultural arm of the United States Information Agency (USIA). As special libraries they are charged with the assignment of "building understanding of the United States as a nation, its institutions, culture and ideals...a necessary basis for the respect, confidence, and the support that the U.S. world role today requires."[1]

Edward R. Murrow, former director of the USIA, once said: "You must tell the bad with the good. We cannot be effective in telling the American story abroad if we tell it only in superlatives."[2] Because one cannot separate the USIS library's political role from its traditional library mission, it is extremely difficult to execute Murrow's policy in all situations. The USIS library is answerable to many different interests, i.e., the President, the Congress, the USIA director, the host government, and its patrons; as such, it must be flexible. Bearing this in mind, the author will treat the various facets of these special libraries. In order to understand the nature of USIS libraries, it is necessary to give a brief history of their checkered

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background.

HISTORY

The Benjamin Franklin Library, established in Mexico City on April 13, 1942, was the pioneer of USIS libraries. Its conception was due to the joint efforts of the ALA and the Office of International Affairs, whose director was Nelson Rockefeller.[3] Within the next year, libraries were established in Managua, Nicaragua; Montevideo, Uruguay; and Buenos Aires, Argentina.

In June 1942, responding to the wartime need for the dissemination of information, President Roosevelt created the Office of War Information (OWI).

> Its objectives had never been clarified and, although it nominally functioned under the direction of the State Department, cooperation with other government agencies was virtually non-existent. Overseas OWI centers operated under the name of the United States Information Service and in combat or occupied areas they were under the control of the military theatre commanders who "were ...increasingly aware of the value of propaganda and psychological warfare." The OWI ended its brief, and at times farcical, career in August of 1945.[4]

The Office of War Information established the first official government library outside the continental United States in the American Embassy in London in December 1942.

With the end of the war and the demise of the OWI, these centers came under the regulation of the State Department. Funds for the centers' operations were reduced in 1946. Just one year later, the American quiescent mistrust of the Soviets surfaced again, resulting in the Smith-Mundt Act of January 27, 1948. Congress declared that "the objectives of this Act (Public Law 402) are to enable the Government of the United States to promote a better understanding of the United States in other countries, and to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries." The Act provided for "an information service to disseminate abroad information about the United States, its people, and policies promulgated by the Congress, the President, the Secretary of State and other responsible officials of Government having to do with matters affecting foreign affairs."[5] The war had terminated America's isolation and catapulted the country into the position of a superpower with new responsibilities. In regard to the effectiveness of the Smith-Mundt Act, Oren Stephens, author of Facts to a Candid World, felt that "it was a holding action. It was based on the assumption, dubious at best, that if other people understood us, they would like us, and if they liked us, they would do the things we wanted them to do."[5]

A postwar objective of the American Military Government for Germany was a program of denazification and democratization of the German people. To

achieve these aims, a center was established in Bad Homburg, Hesse with a collection of 700 books taken from U.S. Army surplus stock. Originally this center was part of an experiment conducted by the Psychological Warfare Branch of the Armed Forces in which only a select group, such as students, journalists, and professionals, would be admitted. It soon became evident that such centers should be located in large cities. The center was moved to Frankfurt and was soon opened to the general public. By 1946 there were nine centers operating in the U.S. zone and Berlin. A contest was held among the patrons to determine a name for the centers and "Amerika Häuser" was selected. In the early years these centers contained no books on military science or aviation. What began as a "Reeducation Plan" evolved by 1947 into an information program.[6] The question of whether or not USIS libraries should function as propaganda or informational centers still remains a polemical issue.

In 1949 the International Information and Education Exchange Program was established as a means of giving the informational program more flexibility while still remaining in the State Department. The International Information-al Administration (IIA) was created in January 1952, thus increasing the independence of the information program. From its beginning the program was under heavy criticism and was even an election issue in 1952. When Dwight Eisenhower took office in 1953, the program was the subject of four simultaneous investigations. The most vigorous attack came from a subcommittee of the Senate Government Operations Committee under Senator Joseph McCarthy. The committee was investigating the policy the State Department used in selecting books for USIS libraries. McCarthy charged that USIS libraries contained material written by communists and other subversives. There was a modicum of truth in these accusations in that some libraries did have books from the defunct OWI libraries and material from the U.S. Army. These secondhand books were out of date and had been written during the war when the United States and the Soviet Union were allied. In reality it was found that there were only 39 copies representing 25 titles by 8 authors who were known or avowed communists. Clearly McCarthy's reaction was far out of proportion to the actual situation.[7] Hysteria ran so high that works by Eleanor Roosevelt and Upton Sinclair were taken off the shelves. One librarian even removed the works of Thomas Paine. Eleven "questionable" books were burned, making headlines resulting in a public outcry.

In May 1952 the State Department's Advisory Committee on Books Abroad stated: "The Committee is positive and unanimous in its decision to recommend...that authorship should not be a criterion for determining whether a book is available for USIS libraries abroad."[8] The criteria for book selection would be subject matter and appropriateness to the specific USIS library.

With the fervor generated by the McCarthy investigations, this liberal policy was reversed in February 1953. The State Department issued an order forbidding the use of material by "controversial persons, Communists, fellow-travellors, etc."[8] Not only was the language of the directive unclear, but the terms could have been applied to almost any book. Authorship rather than merit had become the determining factor. The normal flow of books from the United States to USIS libraries dropped from 50,000 to 300 per month.[9]

With a more relaxed atmosphere and strong public reaction against the book burning, this directive was again reversed in July 1953. Books were to be chosen on their merit and their usefulness to the information program.[10]

ORGANIZATION

The USIA became an independent agency of the executive branch of government on August 1, 1953. While it is an autonomous organization, it still receives foreign policy guidance from the Department of State. The agency as a whole and its Washington office are called the United States Information Agency, but its overseas posts have retained the OWI name of United States Information Service.[11] Charts 1-3 afford a clear picture of the external and internal organization of the USIA.

The USIS library comes under the authority of the cultural affairs officer and is responsible for providing back-up information for any USIS project.[12] At present there are 133 U.S. Information Centers and 35 Reading Rooms throughout the world. Each center is unique and tailors its program to meet the special needs of its own community.[13]

The problem of personnel has always existed in the USIA at all levels.

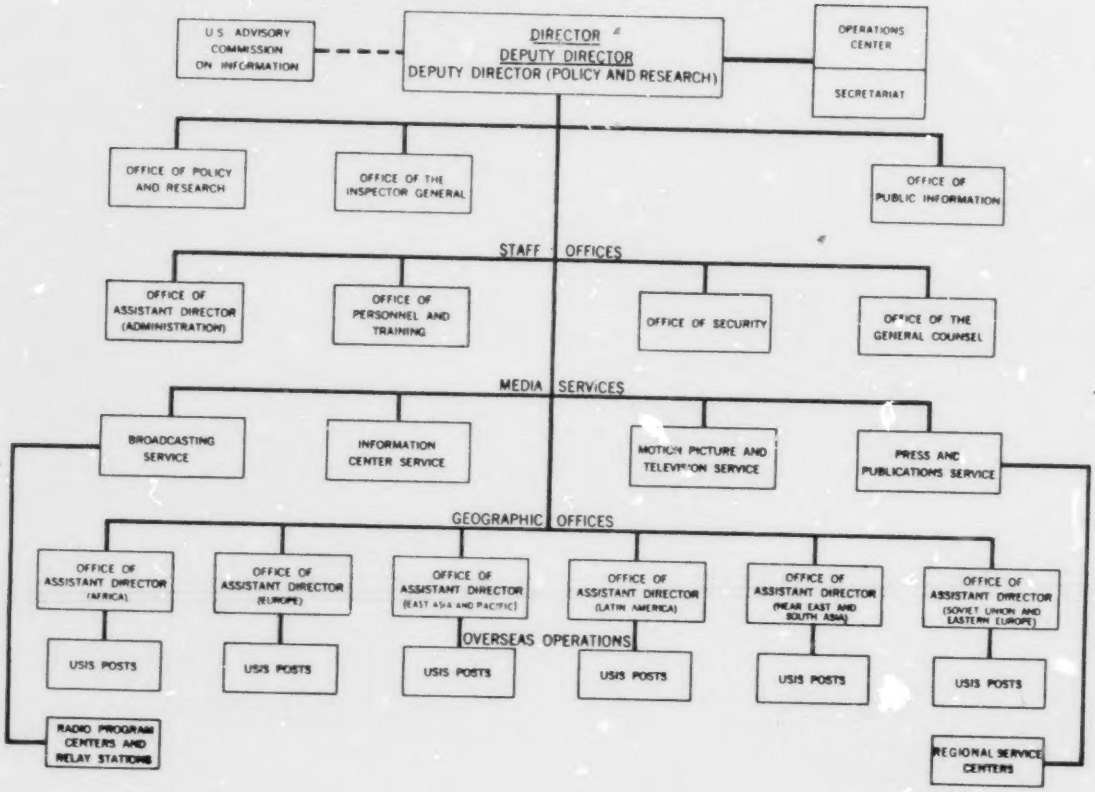
> Top leadership particularly has had an extremely high rate of turnover. The USIA and the IIA together have had twelve different heads since 1949, while the country has had only four secretaries of state. Many of the best officers transfer up and out to positions in the Department of State's foreign-service corps, private industry, and education.[14]

Since 1968 when this statement was made, two more men have held the position of USIA director. Overseas libraries have had an especially difficult time recruiting and retaining librarians. Most of the libraries have no American librarians and are staffed by local employees. The Lincoln Center in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia has a staff of eight with one professional who is an American.[12] It is hard to attract qualified librarians to work abroad for the salary the USIA is willing to pay.

Job security presents another problem in that USIA budgets fluctuate, depending on the mood of Congress. "In 1953...one-twenty-fourth of [the USIA's] ...funds were set aside for information centers; in fiscal 1967, this had shrunk to about one-thirtieth."[14] In addition, USIA emphasis has been shifting away from European libraries. There is also the potential danger of working in some countries. USIS libraries are usually conspicuously located with plate glass windows which provide a very visible target.[15]

Although USIS library collections vary from city to city and from country to country, the core reference collections of the various libraries are basically the same. Books are in English, the local language, and any other language that is pertinent. Rowan discusses the make-up as follows:

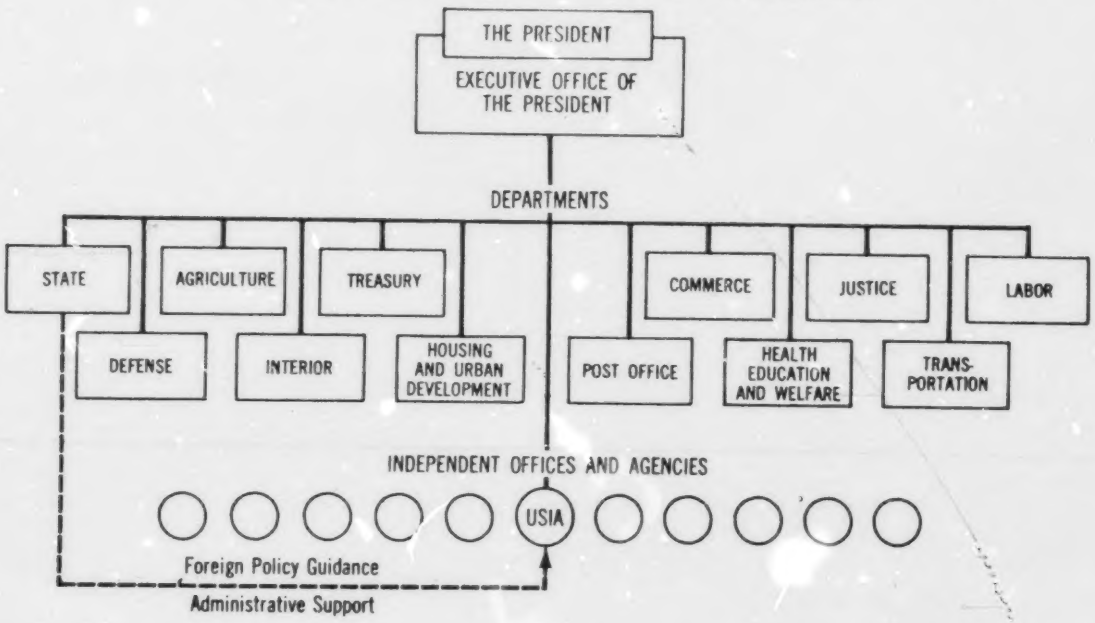
Chart 1
UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY



Henderson, p. 92

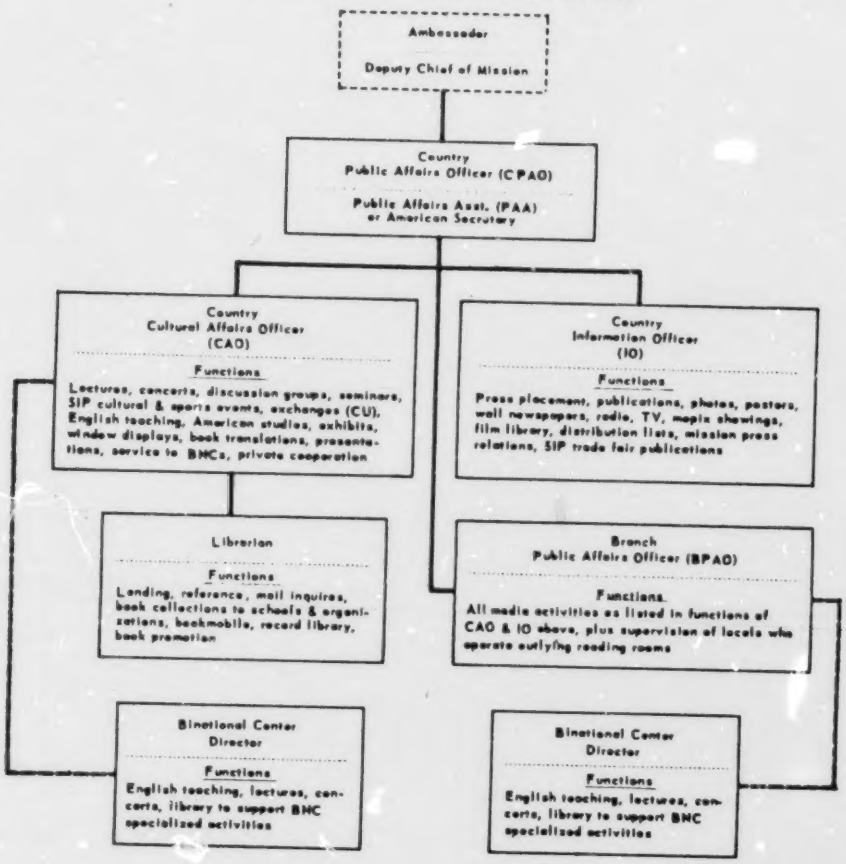
Charts 1-3 are from The United States Information Agency by John W. Henderson. © 1969 by John W. Henderson. Reprinted by permission of Praeger Publishers, Inc., New York.

Chart 2
THE AGENCY AND THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF THE GOVERNMENT



Henderson, p. 94

Chart 3
STRUCTURE OF A MEDIUM-SIZED USIS POST


Ambassador
Deputy Chief of Mission
Country
Public Affairs Officer (CPAO)
Public Affairs Asst. (PAA)
or American Secretary
Country
Cultural Affairs Officer
(CAO)
Functions
Lectures, concerts, discussion groups, seminars, SIP cultural & sports events, exchanges (CU), English teaching, American studies, exhibits, window displays, book translations, presentations, service to BNCs, private cooperation
Country
Information Officer
(IO)
Functions
Press placement, publications, photos, posters, wall newspapers, radio, TV, movie showings, film library, distribution lists, mission press relations, SIP trade fair publications
Librarian
Functions
Lending, reference, mail inquires, book collections to schools & organizations, bookmobile, record library, book promotion
Branch
Public Affairs Officer (BPAO)
Functions
All media activities as listed in functions of CAO & IO above, plus supervision of locals who operate outlying reading rooms
Binational Center
Director
Functions
English teaching, lectures, concerts, library to support BNC specialized activities
Binational Center
Director
Functions
English teaching, lectures, concerts, library to support BNC specialized activities

Henderson, p. 137

> If there were a typical USIS library, it would contain an open-shelf collection of 13,000 books, 150 magazine subscriptions, and one or two daily newspapers. It would maintain a small collection of United States Government publications, a vertical file, and music materials.[16]

Also included in a USIS library collection are microfilm, microfiche, and audiovisual aids. Weeding is done periodically to keep the collection current.

Periodicals that would be found in most small American libraries are available. These range from The Nation and The New Republic to Reader's Digest and National Review. With magazines such as the Saturday Evening Post and Ladies Home Journal, wear and tear presents a much greater problem than loss or theft.[17] The USIS prefers to subscribe to "popular" magazines rather than the scholarly or literary ones because it believes that these periodicals give a more accurate and representative picture of the United States.[18]

Where there is a demand or need for special material, the library will try to supply it if it is deemed to fit within USIA objectives. Despite its high cost, Chemical Abstracts was subscribed to for the Tokyo information center following World War II because Japan needed to rebuild its industrial base. The U.S. Code Annotated was acquired for the library in Monrovia, Liberia as the nation's system of government is patterned after that of the United States.[19] In Cebu City, in the Philippines, lawyers and judges utilize the eighty-three volumes of American Jurisprudence because American decisions can be cited in Filipino courts if no domestic precedents are applicable.[20] One of the main attractions of the now nonoperative USIS library in Grosvenor Square, London, was the classified advertisement section of the New York Times which was "read to shreds every week."[21]

BOOK SELECTION

The Information Center Service (ICS) acts as a support for the overseas information centers and binational centers. The binational centers will be discussed in a later section. The ICS maintains four types of programs abroad:

1. libraries or cultural centers for the study of American political, economic, and cultural affairs, history or science, and technology;
2. a commercial book program intended to place more American-written books in English and translation in bookstores and classrooms;
3. the teaching of English overseas among the influential and potentially so (students) to increase their ability to read American publications or listen to English broadcasts; and
4. exhibits, of different sizes, demonstrating American achievements and know-how in such varied fields as medicine and public health, transportation and industry, or the graphic arts.[22]

An integral part of ICS is the Bibliographic Division which is responsible for selecting books for use in USIS libraries or in the binational centers. The Bibliographic Division also chooses books for presentation to foreign leaders and scholars.[23]

Responsibility for selecting publications for program use from agency lists, bibliographies, and other sources belongs to the senior American field officers at each post. Annotated lists are sent to the field post at frequent intervals from the ICS. Program book lists issued about twice a month, and subject bibliographies which come out once a month are also sent as selection aids.[24]

Books by foreign authors are selected only if (a) their unique relevance to program objectives outweigh their non-American origin, or, (b) their authorship or origin gives them exceptional credibility.[24]

USIA policy "requires that collections of books and periodicals shall be a balanced reflection of American thought and life."[25] Often USIS library collections tend to reflect the political ideology of the USIA director and, to some extent, the President. The book, Beyond Vietnam, written by former U.S. Ambassador to Japan, Edwin O. Reischauer, was not permitted to be used by the USIA under the Johnson administration. It was reclassified for acceptance under the Nixon administration because "it [wasn't] far from present policy."[26]

Books are reviewed and placed in four categories:

1. Maximum Promotion--those books that treat a political subject as the USIA would.
2. Normal Use--books having some relevance and concurring with or not directly opposed to U.S. foreign policy.
3. Conditional Use--books which may require special knowledge for understanding or interpretation; suitable for teachers, but not judged satisfactory for general public use.
4. Not Suitable--books dealing critically with contemporary American political leaders or strongly advocating a policy line contrary to American foreign policy.

Formerly if a USIS post requested a book that was classified "Not Suitable" and justified the request in writing, ICS would send the book if it received clearance from the director or one of the agency's top four leaders.[27] This was done to maintain credibility. Since 1970 any book except one that is judged prurient can be routinely requested for USIS use. This eliminates the need to justify the request in writing for books that are critical of American government or American life.[28]

As of 1963 USIA has had a nonprofit organization known as Operations and Policy Research, Inc. review books that are central to the agency's purposes. The following reviews the scale of charges: "$30 per review for a book 200 pages or less; $35 for 201-300 pages; $40 for 301-400 pages; and $50 for anything over 400 pages. During the fiscal year 1963, Operations and Policy Research Inc. supplied USIA with 610 book reviews for a total charge

of $52,869.24"[29] USIA justified the extra expense of outside reviewers by claiming that "20 per cent of the books so reviewed demand a degree of subject matter competence in certain fields beyond that possessed by our staff librarians."[30]

In 1969, under the direction of Leonard Marks, head of USIA, a team of four of the most prominent librarians in the United States was commissioned to compile a 250-volume collection of the "U.S.A. in Books." Under the leadership of James T. Babb, former librarian of Yale University, this team chose the various books, which have since been placed in all USIS posts.

The USIA moved further to the right in its selection policy in 1970 under the leadership of Frank Shakespeare, the man responsible for running Richard Nixon's 1968 television campaign. James Burnham, editor of the conservative National Review, had recommended the use of conservative works and those that would provide a selection "adequately organized in terms of clear strategic concepts or targets."[31] Among the books recommended were Russell Kirk, The Conservative Mind; Allen Drury, Advise and Consent; Leo Strauss, Persecution and the Art of Writing; and works by Allen Tate, critic and poet; and Donald Davidson, contributor to the National Review. The recommendation also called for the use of noncontroversial classics by Henry Adams, Santayana, Parkman, Hawthorne, Cooper, Jack London, Howells, Dreiser, Henry James, etc.

In an effort to achieve a balance between conservative and liberal books in USIS libraries, USIA had issued a special list of recommended books by conservative authors. The 1970 list included works by Ronald Regan, Barry Goldwater, Whittaker Chambers, and William Burnham. If a collection contains predominantly conservative books, then additional liberal books can be ordered.[32]

Frank Shakespeare, who was replaced as USIA director in December 1972, voiced this opinion:

> I am determined that our USIA overseas libraries will be ideologically balanced on the liberal and conservative sides. I will say something that may sound dangerous--the majority of books written tend to be written by people on the liberal side because they are more articulate. People like Schlesinger and Galbraith. But our libraries must express--clearly and openly--both sides.[33]

Sometimes USIA disapproval of a book can boost its domestic sales. The publisher of The Ugly American sold 100,000 additional copies because the media had revealed that USIA had refused a copy.[34]

Not all the screening of USIS collections is done by the ICS. To circumvent foreign censorship, books are sent through the diplomatic pouch to avoid inspection. A USIS library in Yugoslavia would not stock anti-Tito literature, nor do libraries in Arab countries carry any Zionist material;[35] it would be impolitic to do so.

In 1967 Republican Senator Hugh Scott became angered when he discovered that the Syrian government was censoring some of the periodicals in the USIS library in Damascus. Not so ironically, these periodicals were favorable to Israel. USIA justified its actions by stating: "While this is not an ideal situation, we strongly feel that the return from this operation is worth the resources invested. The Information Center, which includes an auditorium, is open every day of the week and is normally used to near capacity for English teaching classes, film showings, discussion groups and exhibits."[35] To reiterate, the USIS's library role in building understanding of American foreign policy cannot be overestimated. While it is a compromise to the "library code," USIA feels more can be accomplished in disseminating American material than in offending a host country.

INFORMATIONAL MEDIA GUARANTY PROGRAM

The Informational Media Guaranty (IMG) Program began in 1949. Its function was to provide dollar reimbursement to American publishers who sold books and periodicals in dollar-short countries. To qualify for remuneration, the publisher would apply to USIA for certification before shipping his books and magazines. Upon approval, the publications would be delivered to a foreign distributor who would pay his bill in local currency at the USIS office in that country. The amount would then be credited to an IMG dollar account in Washington. At this time, the American publisher would be paid in dollars. United States embassies and other government installations overseas would be financed with the local currency that was collected at the USIS post.

IMG has given many publishing houses the incentive to establish export departments to non-IMG countries. The greater part of IMG support went to English-language books as few American publishers want to publish foreign translations. Because pirating books is widespread in many developing nations, American publishers are reticent to have their books translated.[36]

The IMG Program had a tepid popularity in Congress. Year by year its budgeting was steadily diminished until in January 1967 it became the Informational Media Guaranty Liquidation Staff. The IMG director was liquidating the program while USIA sought new legislation from Congress which would recreate IMG. By October 1967, the Informational Media Guaranty Liquidation Staff was defunct because USIA could not convince Congress that the program was worth salvaging.[37]

Another USIA-supported project is the subsidization of books on chosen subjects to be translated for use overseas. The program began in 1955 and is run at most posts by the cultural affairs officer. Although both fiction and nonfiction books are translated, priority is on nonfiction. Translation rights for American books are obtained and then offered to foreign publishers. The majority of the books are in paperback and cost about 25 to 30 cents per copy to publish. Books are published abroad not only because it is far cheaper to do so, but because there is a shortage of "exotic language" translators in the United States. USIS commits itself to buy a guaranteed number of books for use in its libraries or as gifts. Texts in translation can also be purchased with Public Law 480 funds which uses up foreign currencies acquired by the United States.[38]

USIA has partially discontinued its policy of direct subsidization of books. This program came under attack when it was revealed that many books "midwived" by the USIA were appearing on the domestic market with no USIA attribution on their title page. This is tantamount to propagandizing the American people. The program is still in operation on a reduced scale with the stipulation that books can only be commissioned "under exceptional circumstances." Subsidized authors must now accord all rights to USIA to insure that there will be no domestic sales.[39]

The USIS book translation program must compete with the sophisticated Russian Foreign Language Publishing House in Moscow which has facilities for publishing books in fifty different languages and dialects. In 1958 the Soviets printed and distributed 30 million books in foreign translations. Many of the books are in English and are extremely reasonable in price.[40]

CLIENTELE

Unlike the Voice of America which is beamed to reach the largest audience possible, the Information Centers are geared to a select audience. The USIA Manual of Operations and Administration states:

> Information Centers and Reading Rooms are not general purpose public libraries catering to the general public. They must not attempt to cover all fields of knowledge. While they demonstrate the spirit of American libraries--e.g., open shelves, open admission--they have limited goals and their limited resources must be used to communicate with selected audiences on issues of greatest longrange significance.[41]

USIA believes that a man who reads a book, hears a lecture, views a film, and reads a magazine article all on the same topic will be more influenced than one who hears a single radio broadcast.

Students tend to comprise the greatest number of library users. This parallels USIA's policy of attracting the potential leaders of a country to the Information Centers while at the same time attempting to reach the present-day leaders. Usually there is a minimum age of 14 for library users. Business and professional men do not use USIS facilities as often as students because technical and commercial publications are kept by commercial counselors at the American embassies.[42]

While the British information program is slanted toward the elite or influential members of society, and the Soviet program is aimed at the masses, the United States has never been able to decide upon which audience it should concentrate, or if it should compromise between the two.[43] One thing is certain--the libraries are democratic institutions. In some areas of the world the USIS library is the only place that is open to all races. Malaysia has no real public libraries in the American sense of the word, because a subscription fee is charged users. The USIS library is one of the few places in developing nations where students can go to study and find quiet and good lighting.[44]

George Allen, former director of USIA, recalled a conversation he had had elucidating the American concept of a library:

> I recently asked an Arab student from Amman whether she had used the USIS library there to prepare for her entrance into an American university. She said, with some hesitation, that she used it once. I said I hoped her experience had not been discouraging. She said, "in fact, it was, to be truthful. I took a book from the shelf and sat at a table to read. Next to me sat a Bedouin who looked as if he had just come from his cattle. His hands were filthy. I did not like to handle a book which has doubtless been held by hands like that, so I did not go back."[45]

While the libraries are open to anyone who wishes to use them, a large percentage of the populace will remain outsiders to these facilities. Can we expect USIS libraries to be any more successful in attracting the disadvantaged than American libraries are at home?

SERVICE

Although the United States Information Service attempts to do all it can to help the progress of libraries in foreign countries, there are some things it will not do. Lester Asheim states in his book Librarianship in Developing Countries: "Where models have been provided, like, for example, the USIS and British Council libraries, the local community generally sees no need to introduce its own."[46]

Carl T. Rowan, former director of USIA, echoed much the same sentiments as Asheim: "Many worthy causes in the foreign library field are not USIS business. USIA does not provide services which the local government should furnish. Nor is the library a substitute for any local public library, however willing the local government may be to have us assume that responsibility."[47] Nonetheless the USIS library does perform some very essential and useful services in its host countries.

Libraries are usually open about forty-eight hours per week. Most are open in the evenings and on Saturdays. Several libraries also remain open for short periods on Sundays.[48] Because most foreign libraries do not permit their books to circulate, the withdrawal policy of USIS libraries is quite exceptional. Approximately 8 million volumes are withdrawn from USIS libraries yearly.[49] "Free circulation sometimes results in a high rate of pilferage, which USIS librarians take philosophically on the theory that a stolen book may circulate with a higher velocity than a borrowed one and the ideas in it may permeate a wider area."[50]

Where American studies courses are taught in local schools or universities, special collections of books on American literature, history, economics, political science, etc., are available on long-term loan.[51] Another

service of the library is to provide music scores for community groups. In Malaysia, student counseling is part of the cultural center's program. Potential candidates are given information on American universities.

In countries with a large rural population, various methods are used to provide people with books. Malaysia has several of these programs in effect. A patron can write to the library requesting material by mail, but he must pay the return postage. Circulation is for one month. The library also operates a "book trunk" service. Boxes of books containing about fifty titles are loaned to various institutions throughout Malaysia for as long as three months. New book trunks are supplied when the old ones are returned.[44]

Bookmobiles were an innovation in Germany in the late 1940s. A converted Army ambulance was used to bring books from the Heidelburg Center to hospitals, displaced persons camps, and to the rural populations.[52] Reading rooms in provincial cities are often supplemented by bookmobiles operated by USIS.

The USIS library in Colombo accepts student trainees as a part of the required library science program at the University of Ceylon. A four-month apprenticeship at the USIS library in Madras, India is a requirement for the library science degree at the University of Madras.[51] As Dizard has stated, "In addition to maintaining their own high professional standard, USIS libraries have often helped improve other library services in the countries where they are located. The information services have assisted in the development of modern library systems in over a score of countries including Turkey, Egypt, Thailand, and Vietnam."[53]

It is interesting to note that before the assistance of the USIS, books at the Turkish National Library were classified by size. Subsequently classification by the Dewey Decimal System has been established due to the efforts of the USIS. In addition, the country's first library school was founded in cooperation with the Ford Foundation and USIS.[53]

Supplementing the traditional book services, most USIS library activities include concerts of American music, lectures, film and slide shows, forums, discussion groups, and exhibits.[54]

BINATIONAL CENTERS

> A Binational Center is a private, autonomous organization, governed by a democratically elected Board of Directors chosen from American residents and nationals of the host country, engaged in activities designed to foster better understanding between the peoples of the host country and the United States.[55]

USIA assists the Binational Centers by providing them with American administrative and teaching personnel; activities directors and library personnel; and books and other educational materials when needed.

Included in the centers' activities are the teaching of American English, and information and educational programs concerning the United States. Often a center will serve as a clearinghouse for applications for scholarships to the United States, for testing and screening scholarship applicants, and it will disseminate information pertaining to American universities.

The library program affords both lending and reference services. Its prime function is to make available information about the United States in all fields, in English or translation.[55] The Binational Centers are practically self-supporting because of the revenue they receive from teaching English.[56] While these centers are located throughout the world, the majority of them are in Latin America.

BUDGET

Funds for the USIA are appropriated each year by Congress. Although it was not possible to obtain a breakdown of funds spent solely for USIS libraries, it is possible to make some generalizations on the subject of USIA budgeting.

Often Congress takes a rather dim view of USIA activities. Robert Elder states in his book, The Information Machine, "Congressmen can understand the need to spend money for power projects or defense, but the purpose of sending books overseas is less apparent to them."[57] John Rooney, Democratic congressman from Brooklyn, is the chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee which controls the purse strings of both the Department of State and USIA. Rooney, who is known as a "perennial detractor of USIS libraries," claims that, "in cold climates many just come in to get warm, while many of the readers merely look at picture books."[58] A man fostering these beliefs is not likely to be overly generous in his appropriations for maintaining USIS libraries.

The President's attitude toward USIA's role in foreign affairs can elevate or lower the agency's esteem. Kennedy viewed the USIA as a positive tool in American foreign policy, while his successor, Johnson, saw USIA as an oversized "mimeograph machine." Johnson was influenced by his days as a Senate critic of USIA's budget.[59]

CLOSING OF EUROPEAN LIBRARIES

The policy of withdrawing funds from Western Europe and using them in the developing nations has been in operation since 1961. The USIA calls it "reallocation of resources." Five USIS libraries were closed in France and five in West Germany.[60] The USIS library in Grosvenor Square, London was closed in early 1966 evoking surprise and resentment. Iain Macleod, editor of the Spectator, had this response:

> It seems hardly an exaggeration to say that the library was possibly the single most important focus of goodwill towards the U.S. in Britain....The surreptitious closing of the library--no public announcement has been made and

> readers are still turning up daily to be faced by shut doors--indicates possibly a bad conscience in Washington ....Do we need to remind President Johnson that although we may have lost an empire and not yet found a role, we remain America's closest ally, and that our allegiance is a particularly subtle one, depending in large part on the spirit which the U.S. library represented?[61]

There was cause for concern on the part of the English people in that the library's collection of more than 25,000 volumes represented the largest and most complete body of American literature in England. This collection has been transferred to the Institute for United States Studies which is not as accessible to the general public.[62]

FUTURE

The future of USIS libraries is as certain as ever-changing world politics, the availability of funds, and the predisposition of the current President and Congress.

In the two decades between 1945 and 1965 there had been sixty-eight separate attacks on USIS libraries (involving broken windows, pillage, book burning, and even total destruction) serious enough to warrant documentation. USIS felt that these incidents related to libraries "attest to their effectiveness...for two reasons. First, there would be no point in attacking ineffectual operations. Second, outpourings of deep regret, and in some instances of financial contributions for building repair and book restoration, testify to the more favorable views of an appreciative and more permanent library clientele."[63] The cartoon on page 17 indicates the ambivalence USIS libraries can provoke.

The reader has been apprised of the precarious dual role played by the USIS library as (1) disseminator of information, and (2) disseminator of propaganda. While the library has an informational mission to perform, realistically it must also fulfill its political function waging its "war of words." The USIS libraries were established in order to "contribute to a better understanding of U.S. problems, policies, and achievements."[64] This it is attempting, but hopefully it will not forsake its obligation to advance education and give to the people "the American public library idea, which is one of our really great and unique inventions."[65]

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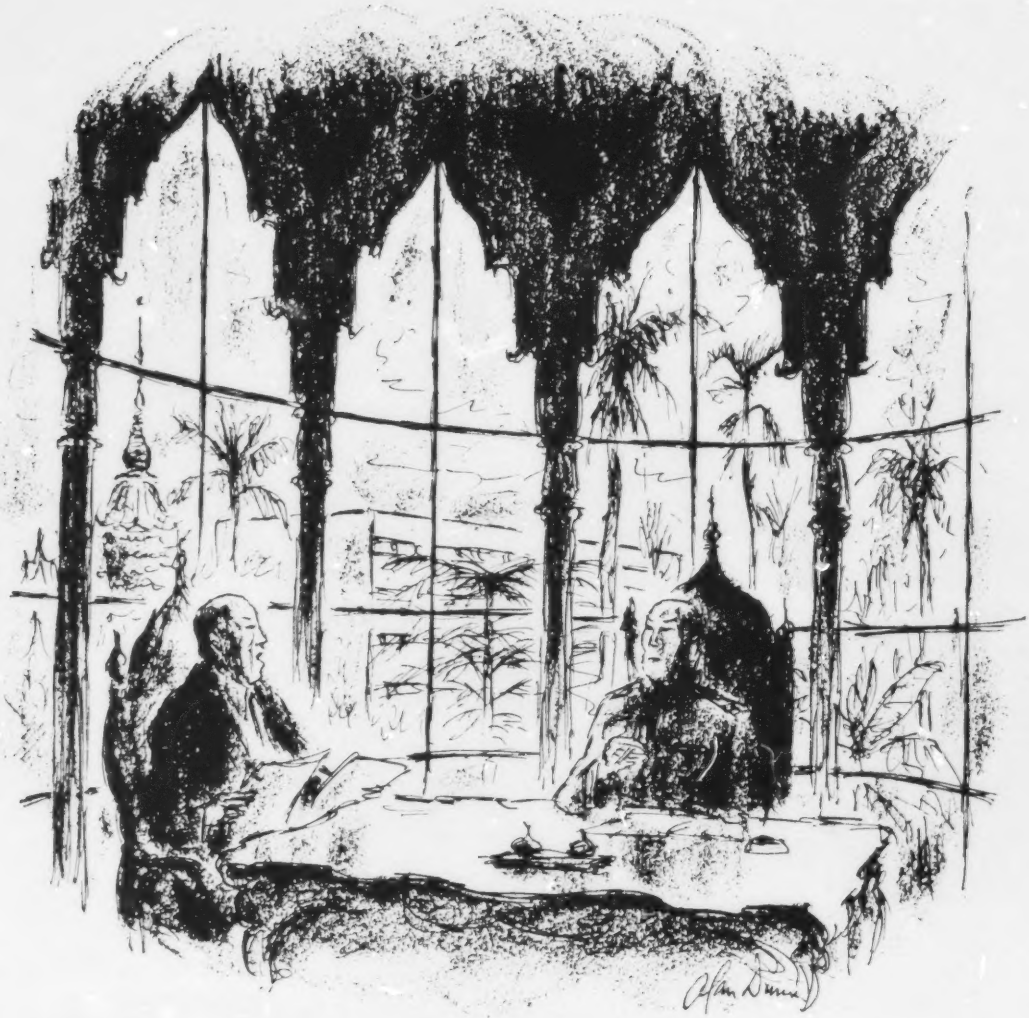

"What's the official line now? Do we take an attitude of statesmanlike diplomacy or do we burn down their library?"

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Drawing by Alan Dunn; © 1965 by The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

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